United Nations

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General meets with members of newly established task force on Western Sahara.

- Working Committee of African National Congress of South Africa says de Klerk Government cannot be trusted to preside over transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa.

- Cholera is sweeping through Africa at a catastrophic pace; World Health Organization, reporting 45,159 cases and 3,488 deaths, launches intensified global programme.

- Secretary-General appeals for humanitarian assistance to Liberia.

- International Committee of the Red Cross announces release of imprisoned delegate by Mozambican authorities.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar met this morning with members of the newly established task force on Western Sahara to discuss the implementation of United Nations plans for the region, a United Nations spokesman announced today..

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is expected to begin operations in early fall. The Mission will oversee a referendum process which will enable the people of the Territory to chose between independence or integration with Morocco.

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The National Working Committee of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) has said that the de Klerk Government cannot be trusted to preside over the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa.

In a statement issued at United Nations Headquarters today, the ANC Committee said the facts that have come to life regarding alleged State

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For information media—not an official record

sponsorship of anti-ANC activities, including the use of foreign mercenaries in the perpetration of violence against South African citizens, "State murder squads" and secret funds, posed a "grave threat to the peace process".

The ANC Committee said the recent expose of those activities underscored the need for an interim Government that would enjoy the confidence of the people, and it called on President de Klerk to put an end to what it called "these sinister practices".

In addition, the Committee has demanded the dismissal of the two cabinet Ministers allegedly involved in the activities, the establishment of a multiparty commission to investigate alleged Government involvement, the opening up of the secret fund to public scrutiny and the trial of the police officers allegedly involved in the scandal.

The Committee, which has also warned against the lifting of sanctions against South Africa, said it would measure the seriousness of the Government's intention towards the disclosures by its response to these demands.

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Cholera is sweeping through the African continent at a catastrophic pace, killing people at a much higher rate than during the peak of this year's outbreak in Peru, Ecuador and other Latin American countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

A WHO press release issued today said reports covering the first seven months of 1991 from 10 African countries, reveal a total of 45,159 cases and 3,488 deaths.

Citing the rising epidemic, WHO announced that it has intensified its global efforts against deadly diarrhoeal diseases such as cholera. The Director-General of WHO, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, said the organization was committed to the global fight against these diseases. He said cholera is a disease of poverty and underdevelopment and that the conditions that spread the disease can be corrected.

According to the release, WHO plans to help countries improve their health infrastructure and water and sanitation systems. The agency also plans to provide emergency supplies of oral rehydration salts as well as health and information programmes and the training of health workers.

The WHO said that as of 18 July, the world total of cholera cases numbered 303,504 cases and 6,174 deaths.

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The Secretary-General today issued an urgent appeal for humanitarian assistance to war-torn Liberia. The appeal document, "Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Programme for Liberia", sets out a $136 million relief programme designed to raise nutrition levels and restore basic services throughout the country.

The programme gives priority to health and medical care, especially in previously inaccessible areas of Liberia; water supply and sanitation; education; and the needs of children in difficult circumstances. It also incorporates important measures for revitalizing the agricultural sector and assisting vulnerable groups, such as displaced persons, refugees and returnees.

The civil conflict which raged across Liberia during most of 1990 had completely disrupted the country's social, administrative and economic infrastructure and several inter-agency missions, composed of representatives of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, had visited that country to assess its most immediate needs.

The United Nations missions had concluded that while peace has prevailed in Liberia for several months, the country still required urgent assistance to alleviate the devastating effects of a protracted civil war.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has announced the release of Hansueli Spiess, the ICRC delegate who was arrested on 21 July by Mozambican authorities, following the discovery of bales of military uniforms in an ICRC warehouse in Beira.

The ICRC said in a press release today that its policy is "to conduct its activities as openly as possible" and "it had therefore requested the presence of Government representatives when unpacking relief consignments and sorting them for distribution".

The ICRC also stressed that "it has never dispatched any military-type clothing or military equipment to Mozambique or elsewhere, nor has it ever distributed such items". The ICRC said it remained confident that it could continue its humanitarian work in Mozambique.

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